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REMARKS

In the Office Action, the examiner objected to Claim 3 because of the wording error therein. Accordingly, the applicant has amended Claim 3 to correct the error.

The examiner rejected Claims 1, 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Okamoto et al. (cited reference U.S. Patent No. 5,557,314). The applicant respectfully disagrees with the examiner that the present invention is anticipated by Okamoto et al. One of the essential features of the present invention resides in the fact that the control signal storage section is provided for storing a value of the deflection control signal output from the deflection control section. As a result, when testing the integrity of the electrical connections in the electron beam exposure apparatus (or deflection apparatus), a scan test can be performed prior to the operation of the electron beam deflection on the wafer.

In the cited Okamoto et al. reference, however, there is no such a storage section for storing the deflection control signal. Although Fig. 17 of Okamoto et al. includes memories 75 and 78, these memories are used for storing the secondary electron data and the mask data which are totally unrelated to the deflection control signal. The drawing data storage unit 22 or the buffer memory 23 of Okamoto et al. does not store the deflection control signal either. Further, the cited Okamoto et al. reference is completely silent about testing the electrical connections in the electron

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beam exposure apparatus. Since the essential element of the present invention is not shown or suggested by the cited Okamoto et al. reference as discussed above, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is not applicable to the present invention.

In the Office Action, the examiner rejected Claims 2, 4-6, 9-10 under 35 U.S. C. 103(a) as being obvious over the cited Okamoto et al. reference. The examiner rejected Claims 7-8 under 35 U.S. C. 103(a) as being obvious over the cited Okamoto et al. reference in view of Yasuda (cited reference U.S. Patent No. 4,145,597). The examiner rejected Claim 3 under 35 U.S. C. 103(a) as being obvious over the cited Okamoto et al. reference in view of Hamaguchi et al. (cited reference U.S. Patent No. 6,703,624).

All of the obviousness rejections noted above are based on the teachings in the cited Okamoto et al. reference. As discussed above with respect to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b), the cited Okamoto et al. reference does not show the essential element of the present invention, i.e., the control signal storage section. Therefore, it is not possible to make the present inventions defined in the dependent claims 2-12 by combining the technology shown in the cited Okamoto et al. reference with technologies shown in any other references. In other words, the present inventions in claims 2-12 are not obvious over the above listed cited references taken singly or in combination.

Applicant has added Claims 13 and 14 which are directed to the electrical connection between the deflection control section and

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the deflector, which is supported by Figs. 1 and 2 and associated descriptions in the specification.

As discussed above, the present invention is fully distinguishable from the cited Okamoto et al. reference, and thus, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is not applicable to the present invention. Further, the present invention is not obvious over the cited references taken singly or in combination, and thus, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is not applicable to the present invention.

In this opportunity, the applicant has amended the specification to correct the minor errors therein and to more clearly disclose the present invention. This is to verify that no new matter has been introduced by this amendment.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant believes that Claims 1-14 are in condition for allowance, and accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the present application be allowed and passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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